

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15 SAM-01 INT-05

/050 W

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R 091230Z JUL 75 ZDK

FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4002

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 969

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SF

SUBJECT: WHITE MINING UNIONS THREATEN GENERAL STRIKE IN DISPUTE
OVER FIVE-DAY WEEK

REF: JOHANNESBURG A-9 OF FEB 5, 1975; JOHANNESBURGS A-58 OF
JULY 2, 1975

1. COUNCIL OF MINING UNIONS WHICH HAS BEEN DISCUSSING ISSUE OF
FIVE-DAY WEEK WITH CHAMBER OF MINES EVER SINCE LATTER PART OF MAY
HAS BROKEN OFF NEGOTIATIONS AND IS OFFICIALLY ADVISING MINISTER OF
LABOUR THAT DISPUTE EXISTS ON ISSUE. THIS MEANS MINISTER MUST
NOW APPOINT CONCILIATION BOARD WHICH MUST NEGOTIATE WITHIN

REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME OR OPEN WAY FOR EITHER ARBITRATION
(ASSUMING BOTH PARTIES AGREE) OR THREATENED FIRST GENERAL STRIKE
IN MINES SINCE 1947.

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2. COUNCIL MADE UP OF MINE WORKERS UNION (MWU) AND SEVERAL OTHER UNIONS WHICH REPRESENT ABOUT 18,000 WHITE TRADE UNIONISTS ON COUNTRY'S GOLD AND COAL MINES. (MWU, WHICH DECLARED SIMILAR DISPUTE ON ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITY JUNE 9, HAS ALREADY RESUMED NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHAMBER ON FIVE-DAY WEEK ISSUE THROUGH MEDIUM OF SAG-APPOINTED CONCILIATION BOARD.)

3. CHAMBER'S POSITION IS THAT IT IS WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH FIVE-DAY WEEK PROVIDED WHITE UNIONS AGREE TO PERMIT WORK RULE CHANGES WHICH WOULD FREE EMPLOYEES TO MAKE SUBSTANTIALLY MORE PRODUCTIVE USE OF BLACK WORKERS. WHITE UNION POSITION IS THAT CHAMBER TRYING TO USE FIVE-DAY WEEK ISSUE AS LEVER FOR REPLACING WHITES WITH BLACKS.

4. CHAMBER HAS CHARGED THAT FIVE-DAY WEEK WITHOUT WORK RULE CHANGES WOULD COST COUNTRY AND INDUSTRY 250 MILLION RAND PER YEAR IN LOST PRODUCTION. WHITE UNIONS HAVE RESPONDED BY GUARANTEEING TO MAINTAIN PRODUCTION WITHOUT WORK RULE CHANGES AND BY CHALLENGING INDUSTRY TO

PROVIDE THEM WITH OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THEY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BACK UP THEIR OFFER.

5. GIVEN FOREGOING, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT PRESENT DISPUTE CONCERNED NOT SO MUCH WITH FIVE-DAY WEEK PER SE AS WITH FAR MORE BASIC ISSUE OF TRADITIONAL MINE JOB RESERVATION WITH CHAMBER TRYING VERY HARD TO REDUCE MEMBERS' DEPENDENCE ON OVERPAID, POLITICALLY POWERFUL WHITES AND WITH WHITES DETERMINED TO DEFEND LAAGER AGAINST ALL COMERS.

6. WHILE MINE GENERAL STRIKE OF ANY DURATION WOULD WREAK HAVOC THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN AFRICA IT IS NEVERTHELESS PROBABLE ONE WILL OCCUR SOONER OR LATER UNLESS SAG INTERVENES WITH DETERMINATION THAT MINING IS "ESSENTIAL SERVICE" OR PARTIES TO DISPUTE AGREE TO MAKE IMPORTANT CONCESSIONS. CONGEN WILL REPORT SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY OCCUR.

GUTHRIE

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